

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA) requires the Secretary of Agriculture periodically to prepare long-range Assessments and Programs for renewable resources in the United States; this responsibility has been delegated to the U.S. Forest Service, an agency of the Department of Agriculture. The Forest Service has recently completed its third renewable resource Assessment, and its fourth Program.<sup>1</sup> These documents, together with a Presidential Statement of Policy, are submitted to Congress, to be used in policy and program deliberations and in the annual budget debate.

Congress is concerned that past Assessments and Programs have not been useful to its Members, its Committees, or its constituents for evaluating policy and program decisions or for considering how to allocate funds among Forest Service programs. In 1986 hearings before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms, and Energy (135), numerous witnesses expressed their concerns about RPA, focusing particularly on the 1985 RPA Program. A timber industry spokesman noted that “even a superficial examination clearly shows that the Program sacrifices the nation’s resource needs in favor of short-term budget objectives” (82). The Wilderness Society expressed support for the RPA process, but stated that “the 1985 Program fails to meet [the Nation’s renewable resource needs] in any environmentally and economically sound way” (100). The concerns were effectively summarized by Bill Shands of the Conservation Foundation (90):

The RPA Program suffers from a credibility gap. The legislation never intended to commit administrations or Congress to Program targets, yet the widening gap between RPA targets and Forest Service budgets is cited by forests interest groups as evidence of the program’s irrelevancy to annual decision making. Further, there is a strong feeling that the Program does not address significant contemporary issues, and has tenuous links with na-

tional forest plans and State comprehensive forest resources plans.

If RPA is to work, the Program must be relevant to the day-to-day work of Congress and interest groups.

Congress responded to these concerns in 1986. In addition to the House Agriculture Subcommittee hearings, the Senate Committee on Appropriations (147) stated:

... the Committee does not agree to continue to spend millions of dollars on planning documents that are not provided in a timely manner, do not reflect reasonable and professional judgments and estimates when they are released, and are not of particular value to the Committee when finally available.

Subsequently, in the conference agreement on FY1987 appropriations, Congress restricted the use of appropriations for developing the RPA documents to \$500,000 for the year (134).

Some have examined the RPA process, and concluded that it’s a waste of time and money. One critic claimed of the process, “At enormous costs in money, manpower, political energy, and activity (and legal fees), we are achieving very, very little,” and argued for its repeal (8). Others have noted the problems, but believe that the process is valuable, even if the documents are not, and that repealing the law would be “tantamount to throwing out the baby with the bathwater” (55).

This introductory chapter summarizes the Forest Service’s organizational structure, provides some of the historical background on why RPA was enacted, and spells out the requirements that RPA imposed on the Forest Service. Those requirements provide the organizational structure for the remainder of this report. In addition, a section of this chapter explains why mineral resources have generally been excluded from this OTA report.

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<sup>1</sup>The Final 1990 RPA Program was not available for the preparation of this report. While the Final is likely to vary substantially from the hi&, this analysis examines the RF?A process, and should still prove useful for evaluating the Final 1990 RI?A Program.

## FOREST SERVICE ORGANIZATION

### *National Forest System*

In 1891, Congress authorized the President to reserve (from homesteading and other such entries) forested lands administered by the General Land Office of the Department of the Interior. Presidents Benjamin Harrison and Grover Cleveland proclaimed 17 million acres of reserves over the next few years. Then, on Washington's birthday in 1897, President Cleveland doubled the acreage reserved. Congress responded with the Forest Service Organic Administration Act, limiting the purposes for which reserves could be proclaimed to protecting lands and watersheds and providing continuous supplies of timber.

In 1905, the General Land Office's Forestry Division was merged with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry (see *State and Private Forestry*, below), and the agency was renamed the Forest Service. Because President Theodore Roosevelt continued to expand the forest reserves, Congress restricted the President's power to proclaim reserves in certain Western States (and simultaneously renamed the reserves as national forests) in 1907. Despite the restrictions, Roosevelt expanded the National Forest System from 46 million acres in 1901 to 172 million acres in 1909.

Other laws have allowed further expansion of the National Forest System. In 1911, concern over floods and belief in the ability of forests to reduce flood damage led to the enactment of the Weeks Law, authorizing the acquisition of lands. In 1937, the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act authorized land acquisition for land conservation and utilization, eventually resulting in 19 national grasslands and 13 land utilization projects, totaling nearly 4 million acres.

The National Forest System currently consists of 156 national forests (managed in 119 administrative units), 19 national grasslands, and 103 other units (purchase units, land utilization projects, etc.). In total, the Forest Service manages 191 million acres in 43 States plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (115). These lands are heavily concentrated in the West, but the 25 million acres in the eastern half of the country make the Forest Service the largest

public landowner in the East, with nearly more land than all other Federal agencies combined (132).

The National Forest System is managed for multiple use and sustained yield, as set forth in the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960. (See box 3-A.) This Act states that the national forests are to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes, and notes that managing areas as wilderness is consistent with the intent of the Act. RPA requires the Forest Service to prepare land and resource management plans for units of the National Forest System using an interdisciplinary approach, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) provides additional guidance for preparing the plans.

### *State and Private Forestry*

The Federal Government has been providing forestry assistance to States and to private landowners for well over 100 years. In 1881, a Division of

#### *Box 3-A—The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960*

Section 4 of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 defines multiple use and sustained yield as follows:

(a) "Multiple use" means the management of all the various renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; that some land will be used for less than all of the resources; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output.

(b) "Sustained yield of the several products and services" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the national forests without impairment of the productivity of the land.

Forestry was created in the Department of Agriculture to provide technical assistance to private landowners. The third Chief, Bernhard Fernow, referred to his agency as a “bureau of information and advice” (96). In 1898, technical advice was formally offered to private landowners in Forestry Circular 21, under the fourth Chief, Gifford Pinchot. This aspect of Federal forestry was important enough that, in 1908, 3 years after the Forest Service was created, Pinchot established a separate division, State and Private Forestry (S&PF) (96).

Formal congressional authorization of cooperative assistance was granted in the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924. In essence, this law established cooperation, rather than coercion or regulation, as the Federal strategy for influencing State and private forest management. This view was maintained when the Clarke-McNary Act was revised in the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. The new Act specifies the six component activities of S&PF: 1) rural forestry assistance; 2) forestry incentives; 3) insect and disease control; 4) urban forestry; 5) rural fire protection; and 6) management and planning assistance.

S&PF activities are organized into three major programs:

1. Forest pest management-insect and disease surveys, technical assistance, and control efforts on all forest lands-is the largest program, accounting for more than half of the S&PF budget; however, because much of this money is spent on control activities in the national forests, pest management accounts for

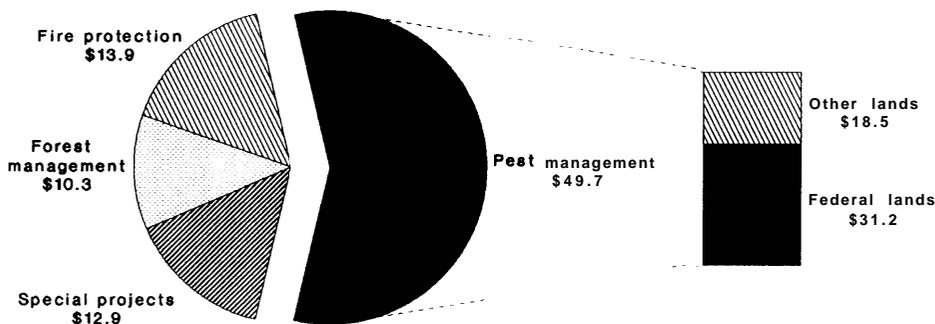
only a quarter of Forest Service cooperative activities.

2. Fire Protection-financial and technical assistance, surplus equipment, and fire suppression coordination-is the largest purely cooperative program, accounting for nearly 30 percent of cooperative funds (excluding pest management in the national forests).
3. Forest management and utilization--assistance for State forest resource management and planning, for improved wood utilization by the timber industry, for tree nursery production, and for urban forestry programs-is the smallest of the three, accounting for less than a quarter of cooperative funding.

S&PF also includes numerous special studies and projects (e.g., the Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies; cooperative trail construction), which account for more than 20 percent of cooperative funds.

Forestry incentives are not funded through the Forest Service, but S&PF cooperates with the other Federal agencies that manage these forestry programs. In particular, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service operates the Forestry Incentives, Agricultural Conservation, and Conservation Reserve Programs, all of which provide financial assistance to private landowners for tree planting and other forestry practices. S&PF also cooperates with the Soil Conservation Service in providing technical assistance on watershed protection, windbreaks and shelterbelts, and the like. Finally, S&PF works with the USDA Extension Service in providing landowners with information on effective and efficient practices.

Figure 3-I-State and Private Forestry Funding, FY 1989



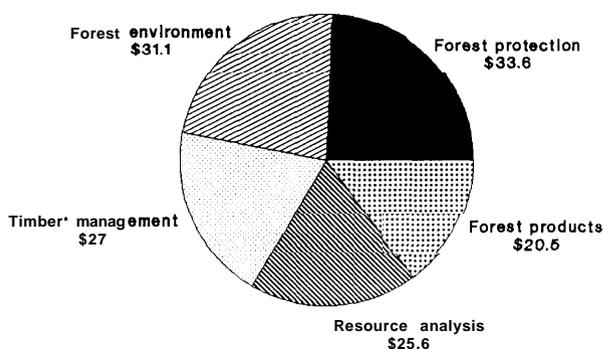
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *1991 Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations* (Washington, DC: 1990).

### Forest Service Research

The first Federal forestry research activity was a study on forestry conditions, funded in the 1876 Department of Agriculture appropriations. Dr. Franklin B. Hough was commissioned to do the study, and was subsequently named the first Chief of the Department's Division of Forestry. Research continued to be apart of agency activities in the 1890s, and in 1899, Gifford Pinchot established a separate Section on Special Investigations to conduct forestry research (96). In 1915, Pinchot's successor, Henry Graves, established the Branch of Research to make forestry research independent from local control within the agency (96). This approach laid the foundation for congressional authorization of Forest Service research efforts in the McSweeney-McNary Act of 1928. This law was the basis for Forest Service Research for 50 years, until the authority was revised in the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act of 1978.

The 1978 Act authorizes five basic types of research on renewable resources: 1) research on resource management, 2) research on environmental effects, 3) research on resource protection, 4) research on resource use, and 5) research to support the RPA Assessment. Most of the funding is directed toward projects conducted through the eight experiment stations (with research sites scattered throughout the United States), and through the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin. The 1978 Act also authorizes competitive grants to conduct research on the subjects described in the Act.

Figure 3-2-Forest Service Research Funding, FY 1989



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1991 Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations (Washington, DC: 1990).

Additional forestry research is conducted with Federal funds outside the Forest Service, although with Forest Service consultation. The largest and best known—the McIntire-Stennis program—provides funding for forestry research through the agricultural experiment stations at U.S. land grant colleges. This program is much smaller than the Forest Service research program; in 1988, McIntire-Stennis was funded at \$17 million, while Forest Service Research appropriations were \$153 million (123). Nonetheless, this independent funding, combined with the relative independence of the Research Branch, helps to assure unbiased research efforts.

### International Forestry

The origins of and authorization for the International Forestry program are not clear. International cooperation has supposedly been a tradition since the Forest Service was established in 1905 (116). The Forest Service apparently contributed to the war effort in the 1940s by examining the supplies of timber, rubber, and other forest commodities in the Western Hemisphere for the predecessor of the CIA (76). The Chief has often hosted visiting dignitaries interested in forestry, and since many of these contacts have been through the scientific community, the International Forestry program has grown within the Research Branch of the Forest Service. However, before the FY1990 Interior Appropriations Act (137), the only real authority for international forestry has been implicit, derived from requests by other Federal agencies, such as the State Department, the Agency for International Development, and the Organization for International Cooperation and Development.

International Forestry is technically located within the Research Branch of the Forest Service. It has focused substantially on research and scientific exchange, with additional efforts at technical assistance to foreign countries, training for foreign nationals, and cooperation with other U.S. and international organizations. Thus, International Forestry has both research and cooperative assistance elements, and doesn't fit cleanly into either of these Forest Service branches (42).

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RPA

RPA was enacted in the fall of 1974. Its principal sponsor was Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, after he

had returned to the Senate from being the Vice President under Lyndon Johnson. Senator Humphrey was concerned about the future of our Nation's natural resources, because the political processes too often focused on short-term problems and gave short shrift to long-term conditions. During hearings on RPA, Humphrey remarked that "we work too much on an *ad hoc* basis in the Congress and the Executive Branch, moving from crisis to crisis, applying policy and funding band-aids and aspirin to long-term problems that require permanent treatment" (60).

The social setting of the early 1970s contributed to enacting RPA. Demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War and revelations about the Watergate break-in were eroding public trust in government officials. The Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 preceded RPA by a month, and was in part an attempt by Congress to reestablish its control of the budget, following impoundments (non-spending of appropriations) by the Nixon Administration.

Concerns over actions by the Nixon Administration also were a foundation for RPA. In his floor statement upon introducing RPA, Senator Humphrey said, "The entire National Forest System stands in jeopardy due to shortsighted Nixon administration policies. . . . Every aspect of management of the 187 million acres of forest lands is being short-changed" (145). Humphrey then enumerated accumulating work backlogs for watershed, recreation facilities, pollution abatement, and reforestation and timber stand improvement, and accused the Nixon Administration of ignoring these growing problems in its budget-cutting efforts. Congressman John R. Rarick, the House sponsor of RPA, concurred, noting that the purposes of RPA were to "establish more long-range planning for the National Forest System, and congressional control over the management of National Forest System lands" (145).

Some Members of Congress were also concerned that many of the controversies were placing disproportionate emphasis on the importance of the National Forest System. The Senate Agriculture Committee staff noted the numerous lawsuits over national forest management, and concluded that widespread agreement on national forest management objectives could not be achieved (54). Senator Humphrey believed that expanding the picture to

consider non-Federal forests and rangelands would downplay the importance of the National Forest System in providing renewable resources. The Senate Agriculture Committee report on RPA has numerous references to the comprehensive view resulting in better decisions for national forest management. At one point the report notes that (145):

One of the most important elements of the Assessment will be the effectiveness with which it displays the totality of forest and rangeland and the dispersion of resources by public and private ownerships and geographic regions. . . .

Forest Service programs cannot be constructed in a vacuum. The Assessment will give a comprehensive picture of the sum of public and private activities and expectations, thus encouraging a comprehensive and integrated Federal approach at the very least.

RPA became law when signed by President Ford, a week after Nixon resigned. It established a process for long-range thinking about the management of our renewable resources. In describing the goals of RPA's authors, Bob Wolf, a congressional staffer at the time, observed that:

. . . the goal of RPA is to raise our sights to the future, analyze the interrelationship between resources, and weigh the differences between short- and long-term actions. . . . The purpose of the RPA is to look at the future and outline the actions needed to make it a better future (151).

## THE REQUIREMENTS OF RPA

RPA implicitly directs the Forest Service to develop a participatory strategic planning process, and specifically requires the development of four documents to be submitted to Congress. RPA also requires the Forest Service to prepare land and resource management plans for units of the National Forest System; this planning process for the national forests will be examined in detail in the subsequent OTA report, expected to be delivered in 1991. Many believe that the two processes—the RPA Assessment and Program and national forest planning—are intertwined in a rational, iterative process establishing a direct link between national goals and local productivity. However, Congress apparently linked the two processes more by accident than by intent (153). Furthermore, the RPA planning process is clearly to consider all forests and rangelands, not just the National Forest System, and thus can only be

imperfectly linked to national forest management planning. To meet the immediate needs of Congress and to fully examine both processes, separate OTA reports on each process seem most appropriate.

The following section summarizes the RPA requirements (the full text of the Act is in the appendix), beginning with public participation and strategic planning, followed by each of the four documents delivered to Congress. These topics and documents are described in more detail in separate chapters in this report.

### *Public Participation*

Public participation is not directly specified in RPA. Rather, the legal requirement for public participation comes from the requirement that the RPA Program “be developed in accordance with principles set forth in . . . the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 [NEPA].” NEPA regulations, at 40 CFR 1500, essentially require agencies: 1) to examine public concerns in advance of making a decision (scoping), 2) to coordinate activities with other government agencies at all levels, and 3) to solicit comments from interested individuals and organizations.

RPA involves both Congress and the Administration, as well as the Forest Service, in the planning process. Thus, interested individuals and groups extend beyond the Forest Service and its traditional interest groups. Congress, as the author of the law, had (and has) expectations about the RPA process, and as the recipient of the required documents, has responsibilities in the process. Interested individuals and groups also have expectations about the RPA process and about their role in the process. The Administration, through the Secretary of Agriculture and the Office of Management and Budget, is another actor in the RPA process, with additional expectations about the process, as well as the responsibility for preparing the documents (although this responsibility is delegated to the Forest Service). Finally, the agency itself should be viewed as an interest group in the RPA process. The Forest Service is clearly a participant, because it prepares the documents, and its expectations undoubtedly influence the nature of the documents as well as the interactions among the other participants.

### *Strategic Planning*

RPA does not specifically mandate strategic planning by the Forest Service, nor does it specify that the RPA Program should be a strategic plan. However, RPA was built on concerns about the long-range future of our natural resources and the need for a written plan to achieve a desired future. This implicitly conforms to current concepts of strategic planning, as practiced by business and taught in universities. Strategic planning sets the basic direction and focus for an entire organization, typically by defining the organization’s mission and purposes. The strategic plan defines the strategy by which the mission, goals, and objectives are to be achieved through the organization’s activities.

There are many limitations to strategic planning. Some result from poor implementation of the plan, but some are inherent to government agencies. Nevertheless, the *process* of strategic planning is often useful, even if the plans are never fully implemented. The planning process, including evaluation and response, can assist managers in understanding how their decisions support or conflict with the organization’s mission and purposes. It can also help organizations to examine options that might otherwise have been ignored. Finally, effective strategic planning can establish a habit of looking to the mission and to the long run, a perspective that is missing in many organizations, especially in government.

### *The Assessment*

RPA requires the Forest Service to prepare a periodic Assessment of renewable resources on America’s forests and rangelands. The first Assessment was to be completed by the end of 1975, with an update in 1979 and every 10 years thereafter. The 1979 RPA Assessment was published in January 1980, and was accompanied by a separate, detailed Assessment of the timber resource. A supplement was prepared in 1984 to update the information in the 1979 RPA Assessment. The draft 1989 RPA Assessment was issued during 1988, with the final document released in May 1990. The 1989 Assessment is a brief summary of the resource situation, accompanied by separate, detailed Assessments of many of the resources—recreation and wilderness, range forage, timber, water, and wildlife and fish—and several additional supporting documents.

RPA specifies certain information and analyses which the Assessment must include for all forests and rangelands. First, the Assessment is to include an analysis of current and expected uses, supplies of and demands for renewable resources, and supply, demand, and price trends. The Assessment is also to include an inventory of current and potential renewable resources, with an evaluation of investment opportunities. Next, the Assessment is to describe Forest Service programs and responsibilities, and their relations to public and private activities. Finally, the Assessment is to discuss policy considerations, laws and regulations, and other factors that affect the use, ownership, and management of forests and rangelands. RPA was amended in 1976 to also require the Assessment to include information on fiber potential and increased fiber utilization.

### *The Program*

RPA also requires a renewable resources Program for Forest Service activities, prepared in accordance with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The first Program was to be completed by the end of 1975, with subsequent programs completed by the end of March 1980, and every 5 years thereafter. The 1980 RPA Program was nearly 6 months late. Disagreements within the Administration delayed the release of the 1985 RPA Program by a year and a half. The Draft 1990 RPA Program was issued in June 1989, with the Final 1990 Program released in June 1990.

RPA directs the Forest Service to submit a recommended RPA Program which must include certain specific information. First, the Program is to include an inventory of public and private investment needs and opportunities, distinguishing between capital and operating expenditures. Next, the Program is to identify outputs, results, and benefits so that the costs can be directly compared to total benefits and to direct and indirect returns to the Federal Government. Then, the Program is to discuss priorities for the inventoried opportunities, specifying the costs, outputs, results, and benefits. Finally, the Program is to include a detailed study of agency personnel requirements.

### *The Presidential Statement of Policy*

RPA requires the President to transmit a detailed Statement of Policy to Congress when the Program is sent forth. The Statement of Policy is "to be used

in framing budget requests by that Administration for Forest Service activities for the 5- or 10-year program period.' The Statement of Policy could be disapproved by a resolution in either the House or the Senate, and Congress could revise the Statement of Policy. To date, only the 1980 Statement of Policy has been revised by Congress, in an amendment to the FY1981 Forest Service appropriations.

Much of the controversy over RPA has focused on the connection of the Statement of Policy to the budget. The authors of the legislation were clearly intending to reassert congressional control over the Forest Service budget, but acknowledged that the Statement of Policy (and, implicitly, the Program) were to guide budgets, and were not commitments to a particular budget level. However, RPA also require that, if the budget request deviates from the direction set forth in the Statement of Policy, the President must explain the reasons for the discrepancy.

### *The Annual Report*

Finally, RPA requires the Forest Service to prepare an Annual Report to evaluate the "component elements of the Program." The Forest Service has produced annual reports since its earliest days, but until RPA was enacted, there was no legal specifications for what it must include. The Annual Report, which is to accompany the annual budget request, is intended: 1) to provide information to assist Congress in its oversight responsibilities, 2) to improve Forest Service accountability for expenditures and activities, and 3) to evaluate progress in implementing the RPA Program. The Report is to contain "appropriate measurements of pertinent costs and benefits" and is to assess the balance between economic impacts and environmental quality. In addition, the 1976 amendments to RPA require an annual report on herbicide and pesticide use in the national forests, a summary of long-term benefits and costs, and a representative sample of below-cost timber sales.

## **MINERAL RESOURCES**

Mineral resources were excluded from RPA, as they had been excluded from national forest management under the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960. Indeed, RPA is the Forest and Rangeland *Renewable* Resources Planning Act, and minerals are not renewable resources (except in geological time scales). This exclusion was discussed on the Senate floor between Senator Hum-

phrey and Senator James McClure (145). Senator McClure noted that mineral resources are important to our economy, and Federal lands contain important mineral resources. Excluding mineral resources from RPA, according to Senator McClure, “distorts and perverts the responsibility of the Forest Service” to manage the nonrenewable resources under the national forests. Senator Humphrey responded by agreeing about the importance of mineral resources, and pledging cooperation for appropriate legislation. However, mineral resources had specifically been excluded from RPA, because Humphrey thought it would have “delayed the reform we thought quite necessary for the forest management [sic]” (145). The Senate Agriculture Committee has jurisdiction over forest management, and was the initial forum for debating RPA, but has no jurisdiction over mineral resources; Senator Humphrey stated that mineral resources had been excluded from RPA “because, honestly, it was beyond our jurisdiction.’

The legal authorities for managing mineral resources under the national forests are quite different from the authorities for managing other resources, as suggested by their exclusion from RPA and the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act. Mineral resources are “locatable,” “leasable,” or “salable,” with authorities and responsibilities defined in various laws, depending on the type of mineral and the means by which Federal ownership was established. The Forest Service has identified 14 major laws, ranging from the General Mining Law of 1872 to the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987, which determine the rights to exploration, development, and removal of minerals from the national forests (11 8). Furthermore, several agencies within the Department of the Interior, and a few

elsewhere in the executive branch, have some responsibility for mineral activities in the national forests. Thus, Forest Service management of mineral resources is enormously more complicated than the management of renewable resources.

This is not to say that minerals management should be or has been excluded from Forest Service responsibilities, or from the required RPA documents. In comments on the 1985 RPA Program, representatives of the American Petroleum Institute and the American Mining Congress applauded the progress that had been made in incorporating mineral resources in Forest Service resource planning and management, but both acknowledged that a better balance of mineral resources with the renewable resources was needed (70, 77). At the same time, the National Wildlife Federation noted that mineral resources are “still the most poorly managed and integrated of all forest uses” (35).

Nonetheless, mineral management activities by the Forest Service have been excluded from this report. The complex legal situation and plethora of Federal agencies with mineral responsibilities in the national forests greatly complicates any such analysis. Given the time pressures and demands for this special report, minerals management is beyond the scope of the analysis. In addition, in parallel with Senator Humphrey’s observation, two of the three committees requesting this study have no jurisdiction over mineral resources in the national forests, and one of the two committees with such jurisdiction is not a requester. With the complexity of the issues, it seems appropriate to postpone the relevant and necessary analysis until this study is completed and a request from the committees of jurisdiction is received.